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PERSIAN GULF
WAR

JENNINGS: There has been another attack on an oil tanker in the Persian Gulf. There have been a number in the past few weeks. And until now it's usually been the Iraqis who said they did it. As our Pentagon correspondent John McWethy reports, it does not look now as if the Iraqis are the only ones.

MCWETHY: U.S. intelligence sources say there is growing evidence that Iran, though it has not claimed credit, may now be attacking oil tankers in the Persian Gulf, signaling a new a much more dangerous phase in the three-and-one-half-year war between Iran and Iraq. Previously, only Iraq had attack oil tankers in the Gulf, striking those leaving Iran's primary oil terminal at Kharg Island. The goal: hurt Iran. Now it appears that Iran is striking back, hitting at least one tanker full of oil from Iraq's friend and neighbor, Kuwait, thus broadening the targets of the war and making the gulf a far more dangerous place for tankers to operate. U.S. intelligence sources say a Kuwaiti tanker was attack^d in the Central Persian Gulf over the weekend. An American AWACS early warning plane, operating out of Saudi Arabia, detected only Iranian aircraft in the vicinity. U.S. sources say no Iraqi planes were even in the air. As a result of the increased violence in the gulf, more than a dozen tankers have been hit since March. Insurance rates for tankers again rose today, this time by 50 percent. It will cost a supertanker, carrying \$50 million of oil from the gulf, \$1.5 million to insure the tanker and its contents for a week. Intelligence sources say over the weekend an Iranian pilot, flying an American-made F-5 fighter flew over the Persian Gulf to Saudi Arabia, where he defected. There is reportedly great excitement within the intelligence community about what this defector may know, about the condition of Iran's air force and future intentions of its government. John McWethy, ABC News, the Pentagon.